

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SCCT-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 AID-05 SAB-01 IO-13 SY-05 /082 W

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R 051844Z MAY 76

FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7655

INFO PANCANAL

USCINCSO

AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

C O N F I D E N T I A L PANAMA 3174

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PINS, PN

SUBJECT: ABORTIVE TERRORIST PLOT: EDITORIAL OPINION AND PUBLIC  
UTILITY OF IT

REF: PANAMA 3072

SUMMARY: MAY 3 "CRITICA" EDITORIAL LAYS PLOT RESPONSIBILITY  
TO EXILED PANAMANIAN POLITICIANS IN MIAMI, INFERS PLOT MAY  
HAVE BEEN FURTHERED BY CONVERSATION LAST YEAR BETWEEN  
FORMER PRESIDENT ARNULFO ARIAS AND FORMER GOVERNOR RONALD  
REAGAN, AND CONDEMNS BOTH FACTORS AS ANTITHETICAL TO PANA-  
MANIAN PEOPLE'S DESIRES. PLOT MAY BE MORE USEFUL THAN  
DANGEROUS TO GOP. END SUMMARY.

1. INDICATIONS REPORTED REFTEL THAT "OPERATION PADRE  
GALLEGOS" (ABORTED TERRORIST PLOT OF LAST WEEK TO EMBARRASS  
THE GOP) WAS LINKED TO EXILED PANAMANIAN POLITICAINS IN  
MIAMI--PARTICULARLY TO ARNULFO ARIAS--WERE CONFIRMED IN  
EDITORIAL OF MAY 3 PRO-GOVERNMENT NEWSPAPER "CRITICA".

2. EDITORIAL STATED: "THE PLAN, IN GESTATION IN MIAMI  
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SINCE FEBRUARY, CAME TO FRUITION AS THE CLAN OF PANA-

MANIANS, CUBANS, AND AMERICANS WHO REACTIVATED IT AFTER THE INTERVIEW OF ARNULFO ARIAS WITH RONALD REAGAN, AND THE LATTER'S SUBSEQUENT DECLARATIONS AGAINST PANAMA, HAD FORESEEN." (COMMENT: "REACTIVATED" SEEMS AN ANACHRONISM SINCE REAGAN AND ARIAS MET LAST YEAR. EMBASSY CONSIDERS THAT MENTION OF THAT VISIT IN THIS CONNECTION IS A GRATUITOUS AND FALSE ONE.)

3. EDITORIAL DENOUNCED THIS ATTEMPT TO WEAKEN AND OVERTHROW THE TORRIJOS GOVERNMENT, AND LABELLED AS TRAITORS THE PANAMANIANIANS OF THE MIAMI "ANTIIPATRIA" WHO WOULD HAVE FAVORED THE "SOFT TREATY" THAT ARNULFO ARIAS WAS SAID TO HAVE OFFERED REAGAN AT THEIR BOCA RATON MEETING.

4. EDITORIAL ENDED WITH ACCLAMATION OF GOP'S AUTHENTIC POPULAR SUPPORT, UNANIMOUS ON TREATY ISSUE, WHICH ENSURED PLOT'S FAILURE, AND WITH A QUOTATION FROM TORRRIJOS ON HIS DETERMINATION TO SIGN NOT ANY TREATY, BUT THAT TREATY WHICH CAN "HONORABLY BE PRESENTED FOR RATIFICATION BY THE CONSTITUTIONAL PLEBISCITE".

5. TO DATE, NO OTHER NEWSPAPER HAS PROVIDED EDITORIAL COMMENT ON THE PLOT, ITS CONSPIRATORS, OR ITS OBJECTIVES.

6. COMMENT: THIS EDITORIAL ISNOT AN OFFICIAL GOP DECLARATION ON THE PLOT, BUT IT ALMOST SURELY REFLECTS OFFICIAL THINKING ON IT, AND SUGGESTS AS WELL HOW THE GOP WANTS THE PLOT ACTION TO BE ASSESSED BY ITS PUBLIC. THE EDITORIAL HAS LAID RESPONSIBILITY FOR THIS ATTEMPTED TERRORIST PLOT AT THE DOOR OF ARNULFO ARIAS AND HIS CONFRERES IN MIAMI. THAT PANAMANIANIANS IN MIAMI HAD A HAND IN PLANNING AND FINANCING THIS RATHER BIZARRE OPERATION IS A STRONG SUPPOSITION BASED ON THE EVIDENCE PRODUCED HERE--EVEN WITH A JAUNDICED REGARD FOR THAT EVIDENCE.

7. OF MORE MOMENT IS THE PROPAGANDA BENEFIT THIS PLOT MAY HAVE FOR THE GOP.THE GOVERNMENT ALLEGED IN JANUARY 1976 THAT IT WAS IN POSSESSION OF EVIDENCE CONFIDENTIAL

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OF PLOTS AGAINST IT. IT FURTHER ASSERTED THAT PLOTTING WAS IN SOME WAY RELATED TO THE CONFRONTATION BETWEEN IT AND PORTIONS OF THE LOCAL BUSINESS COMMUNITY, AND HENCE THAT EXILE OF SOME MEMBERS OF LATTER ON JANUARY 20 WAS JUSTIFIED. THOSE CHARGES, IN THE MAIN, LAY DORMANT UNTIL LAST WEEK. ONE ITEM IN THE PRESS COVERAGE ON "OPERATION PADRE GALLEGOS" IMPLIED THAT PRESENCE OF BOTH MULLER AND

RUBEN DARIO CARLES IN HONDURAS WAS NOT FORTUITOUS.  
(IT HAS BEEN APPARENT THAT GOP DOES NOT INTEND TO LET  
CARLES BACK INTO THE COUNTRY IN THE NEAR FUTURE--  
WHICH MAY NOW BE LONGER THAN BEFORE.) BUT GOP HAS  
NOT ENLARGED THE IMPLICATION OF PLOTTING TO INCLUDE  
OTHER MEMBERS OF THE JANUARY EXILES, OR THEIR SUPPORTERS.  
WE BELIEVE IT UNLIKELY THAT THE GOVERNMENT WILL DO SO.

8. INDEED, GOP HAS NOT MADE A CAUSE CELEBRE OUT OF  
THIS PLOT, HAS NOT ACCUSED ANY DOMESTIC CLASS OR GROUP  
OF COMPLICITY IN IT, AND HAS BEEN CAREFUL NOT TO  
ALLEGE ANY LINK BETWEEN PLOT AND USG, OR ANY OF ITS  
AGENCIES. ONE GOOD REASON FOR SUCH PRUDENCE MAY BE,  
AS MENTIONED IN REFTTEL, THAT GOP WAS VERY WELL CLUED  
IN ON PLAN AND ITS DETAILS.

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